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A new dream for humanity

**2012
& beyond**

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Towards the Light

There is a tunnel where the sunshine pours in. You have a name that came to you before language, before your were born into this world. You know by presence the way home. We've come a long way to get to here, and many of us will stay until the one who left us returns to take us home. The adventurous child at the garden gate. The mysterious eye gaze of your soul uniting with another, or the starry night. The radiant shadows of the sun and moon beckon us into the friendly familiar, that field that is beyond right or wrong, where waves, particles and spirit mingle in joyous creation. Welcome.

Cover photo by Potemkin

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common ground

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Common Ground Publishing Corp.
204-4381 Fraser St.
Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4 Canada

100% owned and operated by Canadians.
Published 12 times a year in Canada.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40011171
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to
Circulation Dept. 204-4381 Fraser St.
Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4
ISSN No. 0824-0698

Copies printed: 72,000

Over 250,000 readers per issue
Survey shows 3 to 4 readers/copy
Plus online at www.commonground.ca

Annual subscription is \$60 (US\$60) for one year (12 issues). Single issues are \$6 (specify issue #). Payable by cheque, Visa, MasterCard, Interac or money order.

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Canada



2012 and beyond

It's all in the stars

I guess we're holding our collective breath as we ponder the significance of the much-anticipated apocalyptic date of December 21, 2012. The Mayan calendar ends on that date and all kinds of predictions have sprung up. Some say the world

tions are all about service, compassion, healing, divinity, ecstasy, humanitarian love and universal concepts of love. The story that touched my heart the most in 2012 was about the teacher Carrie Gelson and her efforts to help the children that come to school hungry

negative side of the coin, Neptune can wreak havoc and cause all types of confusion, distortion and dissolution. Neptune rules the seas, oceans, water and all liquids. The question has come up in 2012 as to what we will do with the pipeline and shipment of oil through BC. The threat to our pristine waters and land is a nightmare none of us ever want to face and now the question is right in front of us.

While the general public would not likely have been aware of it, rabid star gazing astrologers have noticed that our national horoscope drawn up for July 1, 1867 is receiving some pretty intense planetary energy indicating that 2012 may have been a dynamic and possibly troubling time in our nation's capital with much more to come in 2013, 14 and 15. The saying "The fun has just begun" seems to fit the bill nicely. In ancient times, the only horoscope of significance would be that of the king or emperor. Whichever fate befell him was also taken as the fate of the nation. Stephen Harper is our equivalent of the ancient king and his horoscope is showing he is powerful and persuasive and also very wilful and immovable in his ways.

A massive tide of resistance may arise in the next two years, as all kinds of fallout begin to make the news. Fierce opposition is bound to manifest especially if British Columbians get the pipeline shoved down their throats. Mr. Harper will have to go easy, as the stars are not in their most generous dispositions regarding his personal horoscope; 2013 could be a time of grave and serious concerns for the man and he will have to be on his toes to handle the incomings from all sides. The art of compromise will work wonders where power trips backfire immensely.

Overall, we may find that 2013 and onward is going to be a test of our collective spirit as we work towards cohesion, peace and harmony. Major changes are in the wind and, of course, we are the wind and our collective objective will take form as we go. The federal government has implemented maximum/minimum sentences for those that break the law. All this just as the rest of society is waking up to the fact that the drug war has not worked and people everywhere have started to get with the idea of changing the laws and legalizing drugs. The bad guys have benefitted and we have lost out on the revenue. It's a no brainer. We will tire of those that continue to drag their feet and continue to hinder the process of growth and development. Obviously, drugs are a medical concern and we can then free up our brave crime fighters, clear up the courts and get on with helping one another to cope and carry on in these very complex times. ◀

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular Straight Stars column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.



Image © Starblue

will end and others believe Armageddon is in the works. Some chime in with the idea that a great spiritual transformation may take place. God will return and all will be well. It is thought the events that take place at the end of the Mayan calendar will lead us in a new direction. Supposedly, the mysterious planet Nibiru will crash into the Earth on this date or brush quite close to it causing a polar shift. Its impact will change life on Earth, etc, etc. My head is spinning and I need a nap. I have drawn a horoscope for the moment of the winter solstice on December 21, 2012 and outside of the Sun aligning with the galactic centre not much more is going on. There is no planetary line-up to worry about. Nibiru is not in sight and, as far as I'm concerned, God never left the planet and there is no need to return to a place you are already at.

There are some very significant events that have come to pass in 2012 that you might find of interest. Neptune entered the tropical sign Pisces on February 3, 2012 and his visit will last until January 2026. We may not have noticed Neptune's direct effect because it is mostly hidden, but when you consider what Neptune and Pisces are all about, things start to make sense, sort of.

Neptune is our connection to the astral world and the planes above and below the physical plane. On the positive side of the ledger, Neptune/Pisces combina-

Overall, we may find that 2013 and onward is going to be a test of our collective spirit as we work towards cohesion, peace and harmony. Major changes are in the wind.

and without adequate clothing. Many in our community were moved greatly and a great outpouring of generosity ensued. This story was a bit close to the bone, however, because I was one of those children that the generous society helped out long ago. This is what is needed, more now than ever before.

As the great Masters have taught us, love is the only commodity that increases when given out. The overall impact of Neptune's planetary contribution to humanity is within its capacity to help pry our fingers off of the material world and compel us to look within for the treasures that await the thirsty, intrepid traveller. On the

Giving and receiving artfully

Gift giving on your mind? Mulling over your options for the season? There are many unique ways to give. Gifts that heal or bring the recipient into a deeper relationship with themselves, such as seminars, workshops, personal coaching, and healing sessions, are thoroughly appreciated.

Consider a gift that supports our local community rather than sending your dollars across international borders. Give a treasured experience, rather than just more stuff soon sent to a landfill or a storage locker after the next decluttering frenzy. There are a number of services, events or products right here in this edition of Common Ground that will make a memorable impact on the lives of those closest to you.

Also you can give the gift of yourself by volunteering.

What about a gift to our Home and Native Land? The Canadian Government could be receiving billions in lost revenues now escaping into offshore tax havens. Some of Canada's "elite" do not pay taxes that would support our economy. A conservative estimate indicates that 80 billion dollars of tax are not being collected from the super rich of our country. That would be a great gift to our economy.

Remember much of this wealth creation was only possible because the infrastructure used was originally financed by public purses, so it's only fair the rich pay their honest share.

Even with the recent P3s (Private-Public Partnerships) the public taxpayer is left holding the debt.

A blog by Keith Reynolds states: "For the main part, in British Columbia we have not even begun to ask questions about these P3 projects. Since 2002 the BC government has crafted P3s for roads, bridges, hospitals and water treatment plants. Under the deals the private sector puts up all or part of the capital costs in return for a 35 year contract with guaranteed inflation protection to manage a public sector facility."

These are complicated deals, not just simple sales transactions with a buyer on one side and a seller on the other. Reyn-

olds concludes, "... it is only a matter of time before we begin to see here the same cracks that are appearing in the UK's P3 projects. Our roads, bridges and hospitals are becoming chips in the international financial casino and BC taxpayers will not win at that table." They privatized BC Rail and BC Gas. Privateers are now gunning for BC Hydro.

BC's disgraced premier ends up as Canadian High Commissioner in the United Kingdom. Maybe a plum for selling BC's public assets cheap to foreign venture capitalists. Upping the game globally is FIPA, Harper's new Foreign Investment Protection Agreement negotiated secretly offshore in Russia.

Mark Carney, head of the Bank of Canada, a Goldman Sachs alumni, just got the nod to become head of the Bank of England. Jolly good, eh?

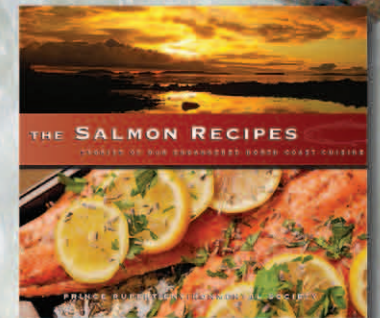
Back home Bill Reid's sculptures *Raven and the First Man*, and, *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* got dumped from our \$20 dollar bill and replaced with a war memorial. The quote on the beautiful old bill read "*Could we ever know each other in the slightest without the arts?*" - Gabrielle Roy. Go read it while you can. "There's some kind of peculiar irony in the fact that a statement of the indispensability of the arts is inscribed right on our money, when money is the very thing that the arts in Canada are so short of ... in BC it seems that the arts and money coincide mainly on paper - on the twenty dollar bill and nowhere else. BC doesn't just receive the least provincial funding per capita of any Canadian province - it's dead last, and by a very, very large margin. ... \$6.50 per capita compared to the \$26 per capita national provincial average." local artists stated.

Well folks, its not even on the money any more. The new plastic \$20 features the Vimy Ridge war memorial with poppies sprouting from the zero. No mention of the arts. Not even a line of poetry "Lest we forget".

So remember how precious you and others are.

Many blessings and wonderful gifts of the season. ◀

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Holiday gifts

What comes to mind when you think of holiday meals? Gravy? The aroma of sage and other herbs? Being so stuffed you require a forklift to get up from the chair after dinner? It is appealing to know we can celebrate with those we love and have healthful fare and not overindulge to the point of discomfort.

In last December's *Common Ground*, we included a well-loved recipe for stuffed squash. (See www.commonground.ca) This holiday season, we offer a recipe for Light Mushroom Gravy, and a dish welcome at any winter gathering: Roasted Root Vegetables. These recipes are from *Cooking Vegetarian* by Joseph Forest and Vesanto Melina (Wiley Canada, 2011), and are an excellent gift for those who want to eat healthfully, and for the vegetarians and vegans on your holiday list.

Light Mushroom Gravy *Makes 4 cups*

This tasty gravy is ideal with Holiday Winter Stuffed Squash, UnTurkey, Tofurkey, baked potatoes, mashed potatoes or to add a festive touch to veggie burgers. You may experiment with different brands of stock cubes or powder; flavourful stock makes a big difference. Stocks vary in saltiness so adjust the amount of tamari or salt accordingly. If the gravy is too thick, add water; if too thin, simmer uncovered to reach the desired consistency.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 tbsp vegetable oil (such as coconut oil or olive oil) | 2 tbsp tamari or soy sauce |
| 2 cups thinly sliced mushrooms | 1 tbsp nutritional yeast flakes |
| 1/2 cup finely diced onion | 1/4 tsp dried thyme |
| 2 cloves garlic, minced | 1/4 tsp dried sage |
| 4 cups vegetable stock or water | Pinch of pepper |
| 1/2 cup unbleached, all-purpose or whole-wheat flour | Salt (optional, to taste) |
| | 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley (optional) |

Heat the oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Cook the mushrooms and onion for 5 minutes or until they start to brown. Add the garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes. Put one cup of cold vegetable stock or water, flour, tamari, nutritional yeast, thyme and sage in a jar, tightly cover with a lid and shake until blended. Put the stock and flour mixture plus the remaining stock into the sauce pan, bring to a boil, decrease heat to low and simmer, covered, for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in pepper and salt (if using); top with parsley and serve.

Roasted Root Vegetables *Makes about 8 cups*

This colourful, warming combination makes a very welcome addition to festive meals. Other favourites that can be substituted are sweet potatoes, parsnips, turnips or squash, for a total of 8-9 cups of chopped vegetables. Those with deep yellow and orange hues are rich in vitamin A (beta-carotene).

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 2 carrots | 1 tbsp chopped fresh herbs or 1 tsp dried, i.e. basil, thyme, oregano, dill |
| 2 yams | 1/4 tsp salt |
| 2 potatoes | Pinch pepper |
| 1 large red, yellow or white onion | |
| 2 tbsp olive oil | |

Heat oven to 375F. Cut carrots, yams, potatoes and onion into 1-inch pieces; place in large bowl. Sprinkle with oil, herbs, salt and pepper, tossing well to coat vegetables. Transfer to 9x13-inch baking dish (or similar size). Bake, uncovered at 375F for 35 to 40 minutes or until vegetables are tender. ◀

Vesanto Melina is a BC dietitian, author (www.nutrispeak.com), 604-882-6782. Other books that include great recipes for select dietary patterns are *The Food Allergy Survival Guide*, *Becoming Raw* and *The Raw Food Revolution Diet*. See Vesanto December 2, 7:30PM at Eternal Abundance, 1025 Commercial Drive. She gives a fun talk on "Veg Simplicity, Veg Diplomacy." Snacks included.

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Ensuring our food supply

On September 10, 1939, Canada joined World War II to fight against Germany. By the end of the war in 1945, one out of 10 (1.1 million) Canadian citizens would have served in military uniform and Canada would possess the fourth largest air force and the third largest naval surface fleet in the world.

As with everything else, the entire food system got swept up in the war effort. Propaganda campaigns drove home the point that food was a crucial component of war and that only well-fed soldiers win the war!

When farmers left their fields, the women's land army jumped in to keep home-front food production going. The "Victory Garden" initiative was launched to get urban dwellers to transform all available city land into food gardens. Front yards, parks and fields, rooftops and schoolyards were put to use generating produce to help with the war effort.

An eye-catching poster campaign was used to spread the word. Slogans such as "War gardens for victory – grow vitamins at your kitchen door" and "Make this summer's garden provide next winter's vegetables" extolled the virtues of growing

Dietary advice given during the war years emphasized the need to reduce meat consumption.


food for the winter months. Root vegetables, winter squash and storage tubers were preserved in root cellars and cold storage.

"Prepare for winter – save perishable foods by preserving now" encouraged various methods of food preservation, including canning, freezing and dehydrating the summer harvest. Women got together in their homes and community kitchens to turn fruits into jams, jellies and chutneys and vegetables into pickles, relishes and sauces. They enjoyed each other's company, working together to put the food by and leaving with a share of each other's harvest.

Foods were rationed and allocated with the use of ration cards. As a result of shortages, food and livestock were often bartered. The public was urged not to waste or hoard food: "Waste Not Want Not!" Dietary advice given during the war years emphasized the need to reduce meat consumption in favour of vegetables. Meat protein was to be reserved for the troops fighting overseas.

From 1930 to 1950, a leader emerged by the name of Kate Aitken, widely known as Mrs. A (1891-1971). She became a role model for the millions of Canadian women who listened to her CBC radio show where she spoke about everything from cooking to childcare and offered delicious recipes and a wealth of information on nutrition. *Kate Aitken's Canadian Cook Book* was published in 1945 and became an instant bestseller. In Kate's own words, "The book is a handy, inexpensive guide to healthful daily living."

The "Zero-Mile Diet" is the Victory Garden for today. All those things that were advocated during World War II are still necessary if we are going to overcome the challenges ahead. We are already experiencing disruptions to food production globally due to climate change and political unrest; in times of uncertainty, it makes sense to go back to the garden to ensure there will be food on the table.

Having just written *The Zero-Mile Diet Cookbook*, I am inspired by how many ingredients I can grow in my own backyard or in containers. I advocate that you start growing more of your own food and putting some by for an emergency. We've done it before and we can do it again, but the time is now! 

Carolyn Herriot is author of *The Zero-Mile Diet: A Year-round Guide to Growing Organic Food* and *The Zero-Mile Diet Cookbook: Seasonal Recipes for Delicious Homegrown Food* (Harbour Publishing) <http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath/>

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Gluten-free Savoury Soup

Fresh soup so good it will make you long for winter. Globally inspired but locally made, Happy Planet just launched Somerset Garden Pea Soup, a fresh, all-natural velvety pea and cream soup with a hint of fragrant mint, evoking the taste of springtime in an English garden. Happy Planet has spent considerable time developing gluten-free savoury soups made with only natural ingredients. Somerset Garden Pea Soup is now available in the refrigerated sections of grocery stores nationwide. www.happyplanetsoups.com/soups, 800-811-3213. 





Briefing Notes on Prescription Drugs

You say yes, I say no

embracing uncertainty in vaccine policy

I have to make an admission: I'm somewhat of a coward in that I'm not particularly crazy about getting in the middle of a war. That's why I don't really like writing about vaccines; there are few things in healthcare as polarizing, fiercely debated and spiked with invective as the topic of vaccines. As I write this, Israel is bombing Gaza and militants are firing missiles back into Israel.

Makes one wonder if there can ever be a peaceful resolution to a situation marked by so much hatred. So, too, in the vaccine world it sometimes seems that even when people say they want peace, it's hard to conceptualize what that would look like with the acrid smell of burnt gunpowder hanging in the air.

There are clearly two warring camps in the vaccine arena and, like any war, it sometimes looks so bleak one wonders if there will ever be an end to the fighting.

On one side, you've got the very positive, pro-vaccine promoters who claim near-miraculous effects of vaccines. They like to point to the great strides made over the last half-century in the war on deadly vaccine-preventable illnesses. They support more aggressive, broader-based vaccine policies that they believe can only benefit the entire population because, well, "Better safe than sorry." These

folks believe that if we follow the precautionary principle, we need to be expanding our use of vaccines to provide the greatest benefit to mankind.

On the other side, you've got a very strident, anti-vaccine camp, whose proponents seem to find fatal faults with every vaccine ever devised, have deep concerns about vaccine safety and vigorously oppose mandatory vaccine policies that they believe will hurt the entire population, because, well, "Better safe than sorry." These folks believe that if we follow the precautionary principle, we need to be restraining our use of vaccines to provide the greatest benefit to mankind.

So which camp are you in – restraining or expanding our use of vaccines? Let's just say I'm in the camp of John Lennon, who famously sang, "All we are saying is give peace a chance." Ok, vaccine lovers and haters, let's put down the weapons for a second and at least try to find some points on which we can both agree.


The good thing is that both the pro and anti-vaccine camps want the same thing, at least ostensibly: they want what's best for the population – some kind of preventive treatment that is effective, not wasteful, safe and proven to do what it is designed to do: prevent illness. But how does one get to that middle ground? Especially when we're in

love with our own ideas and most comfortable sticking firm in our entrenched positions?

Let me propose a mediating force, a kind of middle ground. For the lack of a better name, let's call it uncertainty. This could apply to most vaccines currently being promoted to the wider population, but because we're in flu season, let's focus on the hotly debated BC policy of mandatory flu vaccinations for healthcare workers. You've got the health authorities on one side claiming the policy is right and some healthcare unions on the other claiming it is wrong. How to decide?

Let's be adults here and agree on the following: what is known and true, what is known and false and what is unknown and which hints at where we need to go for more and better information.

Sound like a tall order? How do we amass all that information and dissect it so that the true, the false and the unknowns drop in our laps? Thankfully, many researchers around the world are systematically collecting and synthesizing evidence, finding the best quality research and sifting that evidence in a clear and rational way that gives weight to the best studies and weeds out ones likely to be biased. They are taking all of the evidence and crafting a coherent picture so that people can



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learn what has been discovered and how they went about finding it.

Systematic reviews of evidence are produced by many groups around the world, the most famous being the Cochrane Collaboration whose Database of Systematic Reviews holds around 5,000 reviews and forms part of The Cochrane Library, which can be seen at www.cochrane.org

My feeling is that, whenever a new health question arises, the first question any person should ask is not “What does the research say?” but rather, “What does the systematic research say?” Better yet, “What does the Cochrane Collaboration say?” Because most of us have neither the time nor the expertise to sift through hundreds of studies, the Cochrane group is providing a valuable service to humankind.

Much controversy has arisen here in BC concerning the province’s mandatory flu shot, where BC’s healthcare workers are told to either get the shot or wear a mask and to wear a badge indicating their status. (We don’t have to go too far back in history to a time when the wearing of a badge was a mark of shame and ostracism, but opposition to the policy comes down to two things: the science behind the policy and the coercion with which it is applied.

On the science front, thankfully, we do have systematic evidence that shows the policy to be perhaps more political than proven, which is to say the highest quality

The problem is we don’t know in the ‘real world’ how often a flu jab leads to people getting sick. Without collecting those data, we will never know.

evidence suggests there isn’t much to be gained by having healthcare workers immunized. We hope it works, but hope and expectation don’t cut it when we’re talking about mandatory policies. The Cochrane review of flu vaccine research finds that many of the studies are biased, incomplete or of poor quality, which makes conclusions hard to draw.

Systematic evidence can help mediate conflicts – between those who advocate for stronger vaccine policies and those who oppose them. But often that systematic evidence says we need better evidence.


There is plenty of emotion around BC’s flu vaccine policies where the province is accused of enforcing Nazi-like anti-flu policies and the anti-vaccine tribe is accused of being uncaring and insensitive to the needs of patients. Wouldn’t it be more satisfying if both sides resisted the urge to question each other’s motives and call each other names, agreeing instead on a game plan to do better research?

Wouldn’t it be better if we collectively focused our energies on the quality of the science behind the flu shots and came to a mutually agreed upon understanding of what we know and what we don’t know, in terms of the flu shot’s effectiveness and safety? How about that as a way to go forward?

Better research doesn’t have to be expensive, but it would have to be well designed. We could start by simply determining how big the flu problem is in BC (and stop guessing at the actual rate of flu deaths each year) and whether vaccinated people did better than the non-vaccinated (by proper monitoring and follow-up of individuals) and collecting data on those harmed by the vaccine.

When I talk or write about flu policies, people often share their stories. The one I hear the most is where the person who got a flu shot says that he right away came down with the nastiest flu ever. And he then blames the shot. The authorities universally say this is biologically impossible. The problem is we don’t know in the ‘real world’ how often a flu jab leads to people getting sick. Without collecting those data, we will never know.

Despite the warring factions of the pro and anti-vaccine mobs, we hear a lot of angry rhetoric, but only occasionally do we hear demands for better science, better monitoring and more assurances that better data need to be collected.

Why not start by all of us agreeing there are things we know and things we don’t know. That there is uncertainty. And that we might get along better if we collectively embraced this uncertainty. Is this the beginning of a peaceful resolution? I hope so. Peace on Earth. 

Alan Cassels is the author of **Seeking Sickness: Medical Screening and the Misguided Hunt for Disease**.

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StarWise

December 2012

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109

WE START THE MONTH off with a Sun / Jupiter opposition on December 2. The Sun and Jupiter are friends and fiery brothers in the planetary scheme. Jupiter's influence brings good luck, abundance and good timing into play. The spirit of good will, trust and honour manifests at these times. If you are born within a few days of this date or around June 1, the Sun and Jupiter's effects will be experienced strongly in the form of opportunities for expansion, growth and development. You are in the right place at the right time. The downside of this planetary exchange is that of waste, overconfidence and over expenditures. Going out on the proverbial limb is a classic description of this planetary aspect. Matters related to law and politics come strongly into play.

I don't know if anyone has noticed, but a big storm

is brewing and it is all about the proposed pipeline and threats to our pristine waters and land. Some of us think it is a done deal while others are thinking no way for any amount of dollars. The line is drawn in the sand and whether pro or con, our futures and the futures of our children and grandchildren are at stake. The Sun / Jupiter opposition is a prime type of planetary aspect that puts these types of questions to all of us and we must soon decide what is best for the future. Mercury the trickster and Neptune the magician square off on December 11. I'm not sure what you might do about it, but I personally would not sign anything important as mistakes and distortions may very well cloud the picture.

Misunderstandings and confusion, along with lies and deceit, are on the cosmic menu for a few days surround-

ing December 11. The Sagittarius new Moon on December 13 indicates a new start and probable new round of negotiations, meetings, judgements and rulings, etc. The spirit of Sagittarius connects us to higher consciousness, competitiveness, fairness, freedom and education for everyone. The Sagittarius new Moon prompts us to look at the big picture and the long view. It is time to weigh up how we're really doing and truly make the changes that need to be made in order to find the balance. "Charity begins at home" was a favourite expression of my guru. He meant that we must forgive ourselves and extend love, forgiveness, kindness, charity and compassion to all living souls. We're God's children and God resides in each and every one of us. Let's find a common ground and work towards equanimity, peace and harmony. ◀



ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19

You are a diamond in the rough, multifaceted, multitiered and just needing polish. Complications, delays and endless details bore you to death. You are basically intuitive and instinctive. Now, you must call upon your natural gifts to get you through the next several years. Fate and destiny play a big hand.



CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22

Moon-ruled, you are emotional, sensitive and very attached to your family. You are also very strong minded and tenacious. With Mars and Pluto moving through your opposite sign Capricorn, it may be wise to take it easy and avoid confrontation. A soft reply turns away wrath. It is time to get your house in order.



LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22

You can never really satiate Libra's dynamic sense of intellectual curiosity. Now, an opportune time has arrived in which you can satisfy your hunger to learn and explore. December offers up opportunities for travel. Matters related to writing, education and publishing come strongly into play. Social, political and legal topics are on the agenda.



CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19

The winter solstice on December 21 heralds your solar high of the year. It may not feel too high as you weather a few dynamic planetary aspects, though. December 25 can be a day of surprises and possible shocks. The full Moon on December 28 may precipitate important decisions and changes in your life.



TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21

You cannot live off of the fat, all of the time. Now is the time to economize, trim down and rid yourself of any waste. It is also time to take a long look at the relationships in your life. The meaning and value of life deepens as the days pass. It's a time of marriage or divorce.



LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22

It's time to do what you do best, which is to dazzle-dazzle, mix and mingle, glad-hand, back-slap and wink and nod, tell a joke or two as you work the crowd. New and old friends come into the mix and it is time for you to play and travel.



SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21

A loving parent's instinct is to protect and nurture their offspring. When the little one doesn't want to wash behind his ears, rest assured, mom or dad will do it for him. Saturn is a stern taskmaster. He visits Scorpio for the next two years. His instinct and objective are to keep you safe and clean.



AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19

Knowledge without incorporating wisdom is likened to a donkey with a load of books on his back. They're not doing him any good. It's not what you know, but what you do with what you know that is of importance. The old soundtrack has been wiped clean. It's time to go in a new direction.



GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20

Jupiter, king of the Gods, continues his Gemini visit until late June 2013. He offers up an opportunity to expand your awareness. There is an intrinsic spirituality and angelic quality that many Geminis possess. You can reflect on the past and all that has happened in your life. Now, the urge for freedom becomes very strong.



VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22

Your solar fourth and tenth houses are activated. These houses represent your home and career activities. A busy time is indicated as you work towards expanding your career interests. Land and real estate may come into the play. Partnership potential is very strong. Keep perfecting your skills. Opportunities for advancement and growth are close at hand.



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21

The Sagittarius new Moon on December 13 signals a fresh start. It's time to review and renew your perspective. Take your time, as the picture may not be clear until late December. Interesting and important news arrives around December 17 and matters of the heart take precedence on December 22. Christmas brings powerful revelations and realizations.



PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20

Nothing is real and everything is surreal with Neptune visiting Pisces. Neptune connects us to higher consciousness and to realities beyond our intellectual scope. Your desire to help those less fortunate is stronger than ever. Artists, actors, musicians, healers, dreamers and dancers will receive the higher influences of Neptune. The angelic, saintly ones will manifest now.

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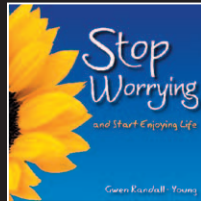
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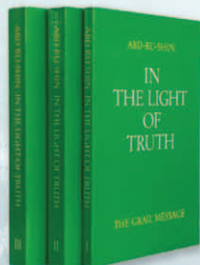
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Nature's genius

When I canoe or hike along the edge of lakes or oceans and see trees that seem to be growing out of rock faces, I am blown away. How do they do it? Think about a seed. Once it lands, it's stuck. It can't move to find better soil, moisture or sunlight. It's able to create every part of itself to grow and reproduce. After it sprouts and sends out roots and leaves, other species want to eat it. It can't run, hide or fight back. It's a wonder trees are able to survive at all, yet they can flourish and live for hundreds of years. They're evolutionary wonders that have developed a bag of chemical tricks to ward off predators, infections, storms, fires and ways to communicate and even share scarce resources. In Ecuador's Yasuni National Park, I saw a tree that is reputed to "walk!"

We have much to learn by studying nature. Biomimicry, a word coined by biologist and writer Janine Benyus, means to copy nature. Since life originated some 3.9 billion years ago, organisms have been confronted with strikingly similar challenges: where to find nourishment, how to keep from being eaten, what to do when infected by a parasite or disease, what to do with bodily wastes and how to reproduce and ensure offspring survive. Over billions of years and in billions of species, the solutions to these problems have been

If we asked, with greater humility, "How does nature solve problems?" we might find solutions.

myriad, often subtle – even surprising – but always highly informative.

Almost all species that have existed are estimated to have gone extinct within an average of a few million years. Humans are an infant species, a mere 150,000 years old. But, armed with a massive brain, we've not only survived, we've used our wits to adapt to and flourish... We've accelerated the rate of cultural evolution far beyond the speed of biological or genetic change.

Technological creativity has been critical to our success... These powerful innovations affect our lives and the way we live and think of ourselves. When I did my first television series in 1962, the medium was denigrated as the "boob tube." We said it jokingly, but it reflected an anxiety about the negative aspects of this new instrument. Over and over, we have become enamoured with the immediate benefits of technological innovation without recognizing deleterious consequences.

When DDT and other pesticides were introduced, we knew nothing of bio-magnification, that molecules could be concentrated hundreds of thousands of times up the food web. And no one had a clue that the sun's ultraviolet radiation would cleave chlorine free radicals from CFC molecules and ravage the ozone layer. Think of all the psychological and social effects... we now see from the ubiquity of computers, cell phones and video games.

We need to look at the way we create and introduce technology. Perhaps it's time to ask, "Why do we need this?" "Does it improve our lives in a significant way?" And then we may ask, "What are the wider repercussions of this invention throughout nature and over time?" If we asked, with greater humility, "How does nature solve problems?" we might find solutions that would avert or minimize negative consequences.

I've always been struck by the fact that when an animal poops, insects and fungi immediately jump on and start feasting. Nature doesn't waste. If all the "waste" we create could become another organism's food or the material for another useful process, we might even eliminate the word waste altogether. ◀

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NEWSBITES

The Salmon Recipes: A gift for everyone who wants to keep the North Coast oil tanker free

In *The Salmon Recipes: Stories of our Endangered North Coast Cuisine*, The Prince Rupert Environmental Society has woven a tapestry of incredible photographs, personal anecdotes from people living on the North Coast who are concerned about proposed oil tankers in their waters and of course, amazing recipes for salmon dishes. The non-profit organization created *The Salmon Recipes* to raise awareness of First Nations culture and how integral the salmon are to food security and how both are threatened by oil tankers. In this book, the people of the North Coast celebrate their rich culture of food in a region that has supported the sharing of bountiful sea resources since the beginning of time. (\$19.99) **For more information or to buy the book, visit saveourskeenasalmon.org** All book profits go to keeping our coast oil tanker free. (See display ad in Common Ground.)

Will government implement Cohen's salmon sustainability recommendations?

At the end of October, the Final Report of the Cohen Inquiry was made public. The 1,100 page Report was released almost three years after Prime Minister Harper announced Justice Bruce Cohen's mandate to investigate and provide recommendations for improving the sustainability of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River, including any changes to the operations of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO).

The Cohen Report has some strong conclusions and recommendations regarding the recovery and sustainability of wild salmon. These include the DFO's confusion around its primary mandate: – the conservation of wild fish, implementation of the Wild Salmon Policy, and the risks posed by pathogen and disease from open net-pen fish farms. Stan Proboszcz, Watershed Watch's Fisheries Biologist who participated in the full Inquiry, has initial concerns about Justice Cohen's Report, including the omission of recommendations around open net-pen salmon farms outside the Discovery Islands; there are also no recommendations regarding

transitioning to closed containment.

The true test of the Cohen Inquiry will be quick implementation by all levels of government. However, Justice Cohen identified recent government actions as suggesting a lack of interest in salmon protection – and the results of the \$26 million federally funded Inquiry itself. These include the weakening of environmental legislation – including the Fisheries Act – and granting of a new open net-pen salmon farm licence in Clayoquot Sound, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Visit www.watershed-watch.org and www.saveoursalmon.ca

Hope for cardiac patients – chelation proven safe and effective

The results of the Trial to Assess Chelation Therapy (TACT) were announced to the world in November at the American Heart Association Scientific Sessions in Los Angeles. The bottom line result: EDTA chelation therapy is a safe, effective treatment for people who have had a heart attack. The double blind TACT trial

randomized 1,700 patients over the age 50 who had suffered a heart attack to receive 40 infusions containing EDTA – with or without vitamins – or a placebo, over a period of about one year. After five years of follow-up, those who had received EDTA had a statistically significant 18% reduced risk of death, stroke, heart attack or revascularization. Participants who also had diabetes got much more benefit, with a 39% risk reduction. After a total of 55,222 infusions, there was no difference in side effects or complications between the two groups.

From *Seekers Centre for Integrative Medicine*, www.seekerscentre.com

GM 2,4-D-tolerant crops set to accelerate pesticide use

In November, civil society groups Équiterre, Nature Québec, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Prevent Cancer Now, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network and Vigilance OGM denounced regulatory approval of Canada's first corn and soy crop plants genetically

engineered (also called genetically modified or GM) to tolerate doses of the herbicide 2,4-D. The groups say the new GM crops, developed by Dow AgroSciences, will lead to increased herbicide use, with more toxic pesticides in the environment and our food.

"The federal government has recklessly approved a GM food crop that is tolerant to yet another toxic pesticide, even though earlier GM glyphosate-tolerant crops already created superweeds and increased pesticide use. These same problems will be recreated by 2,4-D crops," said Dr. Warren Bell (MD) of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, "Our environment, food and population will be increasingly exposed to another hazardous product."

"The governments of Quebec, Ontario and Nova Scotia have already banned 2,4-D for cosmetic use because of environmental and health concerns, particularly risks to children," said Nadine Bachand of Équiterre.

From *Canadian Biotechnology Action Network*, www.cban.ca

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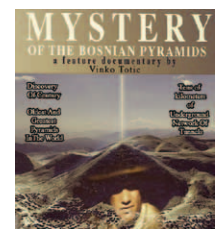
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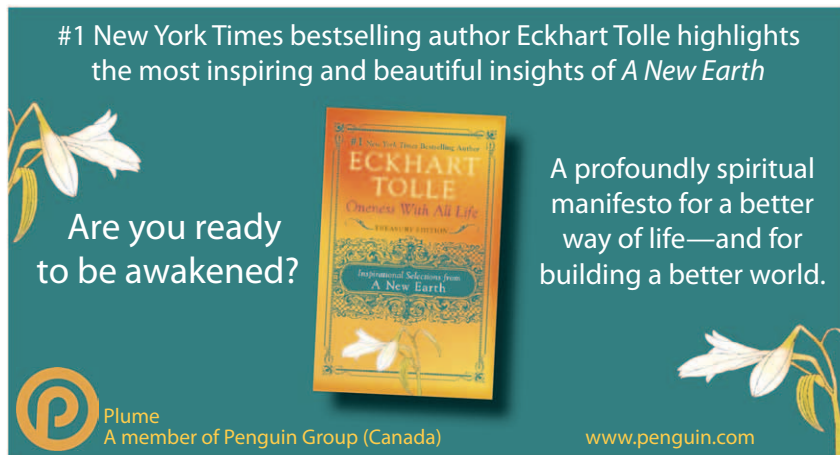
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Just now

an interview with Eckhart Tolle

To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of *Common Ground*. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.

JR: In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

ET: Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.



Eckhart Tolle with *Common Ground* publisher Joseph Roberts.

Photo by Ishi Dinim.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

JR: And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

ET: Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

JR: At least you're out of denial.

ET: Yes, that's why in the film *A Beautiful Mind*, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

JR: I remember you saying before you published your last book that the next one would be about why there isn't peace on this planet. Was finding a solution one of the major intentions of *A New Earth*?

ET: Yes, to see the nature of the major dysfunction. That's why I talk quite a bit about the ego in this book. We need to recognize the nature of the dysfunction. Sometimes, even very great Eastern teachers sometimes neglect that part because they're not really touched by the magnitude of, especially, the Western ego. So it's very important for us to see the dysfunction so that we can recognize it when it arises.

Part of the new book is about recognizing the ego, which I regard as a semi-autonomous energy. It's an energy field. Every thought you think is an energy field. It has a form and then it dissolves and then there is another form. The ego itself is an energy field and it has a collective and individual aspect. Every individual ego is part of the collective. They're connected. Every individual is a manifestation of the collective. To recognize that is essential because the ego, being a very clever entity, has many ways of reappearing. Even if you've seen it in one disguise, it can suddenly reappear in a new one.

You might suddenly realize your whole sense of self, identity, is being derived from your possessions and social position. You see that your whole sense of identity is bound up with that and you recognize one aspect of ego. Well, usually it only comes to people when they suffer, when the identification with something no longer works...

It's recognizing the ego in its many disguises. I've met Buddhist monks who had enormous egos without knowing it. I remember being in a monastery afraid to approach them because they seemed so aloof. Yet I've met other Buddhist monks who were like little children and it was a joy to talk to them because they'd laugh and not take themselves seriously at all. They didn't take the whole Buddhist thing seriously either, yet they practised it knowing it was only a form and they weren't identified with it.

There's a dimension in us that has nothing to do with content. Self-realization is that I am not that. I'm not my story, not my grievances and hang-ups, not the story of me that I'm telling other people at parties or repeating in my head again and again. That is only form. It's temporary.

When you see what you're not, it's already liberating. Something inside you breathes a sigh of relief. Then, of course, the mind begins to ask, "What are you if you are not that?" It wants an answer. In other words, it wants some new form. It wants a new thought. There must be a thought that I am. But it doesn't work like that. That's why the great book the *Tao Te Ching* starts with the line that the Tao that can be spoken of is not the true Tao because Tao – in the ancient Chinese way of putting it – is the formless dimension. You could say pure consciousness, but with any term we use we have to be careful it's not mistaken for "It." Otherwise, the mind comes in and says, "Oh, consciousness, yes. I believe that I'm consciousness." It's not another belief. It's finding that spaciousness inside yourself that's there when you let go of identification of form. ◀

Excerpted from **Just now: a two-part interview with Eckhart Tolle** by Joseph Roberts. Read the full interview online. Go to www.commonground.ca Click on archives. Click on 2007 at the top of the page. For part one, click on September 2007. For part two, click on October 2007.

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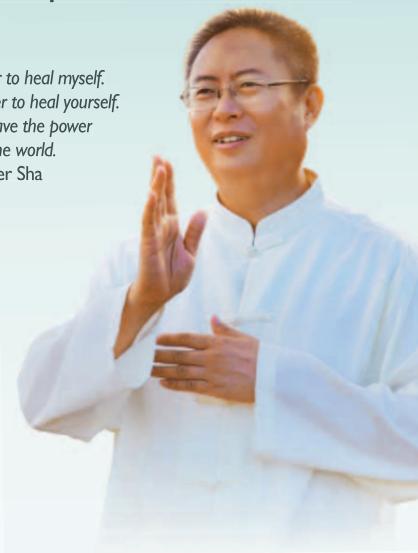
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What bullying teaches

Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive. – The Compassionate Life, the Dalai Lama

At the same time the media was flooded with stories about teen suicide as a result of bullying, I had a mom bring in her seven-year-old daughter to talk about friends. It seems her best friend was in a different class this year and this best friend had made a new friend whom I will call Kelly.

At recess, when the old friend wanted to play with them, Kelly announced they just wanted to play by themselves so the old friend could not join them. My little client's mom was upset that the old friend was treated this way. The old friend's mom was upset that her daughter was hurt. Apparently, the word among many of the moms was that Kelly was not a very nice girl.

Yikes! The moms of seven-year-old girls are gossiping about one of them and telling their daughters that Kelly is not very nice? When exactly does bullying behaviour start and why?

It seems there are indeed some innate, ego-based characteristics. The young child does not want to share and may well be jealous of a new sibling. They will drop the old in favour of the new and novel. This is all natural and part of the developmental evolution.

It is interesting to me that we are all human beings, but the variation in evolutionary levels can be astounding. In the same world, we have beings like Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama, as well as men who try to kill a 14-year-old girl who stands up for the rights of girls to be educated and predators who abuse children.


I think the human mind is like a computer that has all future versions installed at the same time and how it operates depends on which system we access. I had a

wonderful iMac that I purchased many years ago. All I used it for was music, email and word processing. I just never learned to use all its other functions.

Children will either use the programs they are taught or the ones they see others around them using. In some countries, young children know how to use guns before they can read. In other places, they will give away their last bit of food so another can eat.

*In the movie **Bambi**, Thumper said, "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all."*

If a person grows to adulthood and has not evolved out of the ego-based patterns, they cannot model or teach their children a better way. The mom at the beginning of the article was aware she should teach her daughter to consider the feelings of others and not be mean, but was unaware of the insidiousness of what the adults were doing and modelling for their girls. The message the parents were sending was that we should be nice to our friends, but it is okay to isolate and criticize those we do not like.

Well, it seems that is the fundamental problem in our world. Still. It's not that complicated and children *will* get it if we show them the way. After all, in the movie *Bambi*, Thumper said, "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all." That is a start down the road to loving kindness we all can take, if only we choose to do so. 

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, "Deep Powerful Change" hypnosis CDs and new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca See display ad this issue.

Good Eats

La Dolce Vita

Alastair Gregor

FOOD

“A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn. Fall on your knees! Oh, hear the angel voices!” With these words from *O Holy Night*, I ask you this season to release all the conditioning you have learned, discharge all notions of control and instead find freedom and liberation, rejoicing in everything this season brings. Say yes to everything, participate and indulge your spirit as if you were a child again. Fill your soul, fill your heart and fill your belly. In Isaiah 22.13 it is written, “Behold joy and gladness... let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.”

This is the time of the year to break your own bonds and feed your soul, as it is your soul, the true you, who strives for more. We are masters of each moment. Within each moment we find perfection, beauty and joy, for we are alive and able. Fear dissolves into trust and we find compassion as part of a great unity with all creation – the grace, passion and glory of being alive.

Why, then, are so many of us quietly dying inside? Why are we afraid of getting old, of participating, of living life fully engaged? Life is a one-way ticket; we are born, we die. There is no escaping death; it is but a blink between this world and the next. It is time to tear down your walls of fear and let them dissolve away. Open yourselves to your magnificent spirit's healing flow of love, light and brilliance.


Pray for peace between the diversity of people and cultures, for unity, harmony, appreciation with the spirit of understanding that we are all one, sharing this miraculous world. This is the time of gratitude for what we have now; there is so much to be thankful for. Surrender to joy, forgive the past, have faith and you will discover a healthy, new loving relationship with yourself.



Hazrat Inayat Khan, poet and teacher of a Sufi Order said, “The peace for which every soul strives, and which is the true nature of God and the utmost goal of a man, is but the outcome of harmony.”

Break free from your rational nature and transcend limiting beliefs. Get out and participate. Delight your senses this season; do everything to indulge your body, get out of your mind and explore. (The Hebrew festival Hanukkah celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, December 8-16). Feast on music this joyous season of merriment. Dispense with any excuses, liberate your mind from self-judgement and passionately give yourself permission to entertain your soul. Find the courage to be indifferent to limitations and to enthusiastically feed your senses.

While doing all this, I invite you to keep a journal, such as *The Gratitude Power Workbook* by Nina Lesowitz and Mary Beth Sammons. Use this book or your own journal to express your gratitude and thanks, focusing on everything that is good, beautiful and wondrous. Where you put your focus expands. It is through gratitude that your life becomes richer, calmer, more harmonious.

Start today with your food – choose food that is healthy, beautiful fresh. Make every movement count, every moment special. Dress up, ask strangers out, share, walk in meditation, quietly and loudly participate, treasure the change, join in and magnify your purpose. 

To advertise your restaurant, food product or service in our Good Eats section, please contact food writer Chef **Alastair Gregor** at alastair@commonground.ca. Alastair's life-long passion for food was inherited from his grandmother.

Self worth - the key to increasing it



of moral behaviour that we find in all the great religions of the world come into play. To have self-worth, we must live by these rules of morality because these prescriptions honour our worth and our divinity.

These prescriptions include not harming others through our words or actions, being loyal, refraining from gossip, not judging, stealing or telling lies, having pure, positive and kind thoughts, being content with one's circumstances, being self-disciplined and being calm, forgiving and respectful. Note your own reactions upon reading this. A part of you intuitively knows that yes, this is the right way to live. Your soul recognizes this truth because goodness is part of our inherent nature as human beings.

Each of these spiritual rules is a portal, an opening to deepening our sense of self-worth.

When people feel guilty, I invite them to deeply investigate whether there may be some legitimacy to this feeling. Regardless of what anyone else says or thinks or any justifications they themselves may have for their actions, do they feel at peace with what they said or did? Did they act from a place of purity and kindness? If the same thing was said or done to them, would they feel okay?

And one's duty doesn't stop there. It is said that actions speak louder than words, but intentions speak louder than actions. If we perform a good deed or a compassionate act, but our mind is filled with envy, criticism, resentment or jealousy or if we are doing things conditionally so others will think we are great and approve of us, or we do it to get others to take care of us, the action has very little value. Ultimately, the action will leave us feeling depleted rather than rejuvenated because it's the intention behind the action that impacts us and others.

We may be able to fool others, but we can't fool our conscience. Conscience is part of every human being's inner wisdom informed by our soul. Intentions, therefore, must be pure, unconditional and selfless, without expectations. I realize this is hard to do, but this is precisely what we must examine in ourselves in order to gain self-worth. Our conscience knows when our intentions are impure and this leaves us feeling dissatisfied and uneasy.

Let's face it; the world is a mess and people feel terrible about themselves too much of the time. This is not because of some random act of God. It's because of how we act. Our greed, prejudice and unkindness have led us to stray from doing what is healthy and good for ourselves and for others. We are born to be good; here's some evidence. In 2007, Yale University conducted a study published in the journal *Nature*. They took over 200 10-month-old toddlers who could not yet speak and showed each of them a simple puppet show that featured three characters. In it, puppet number one attempts to climb up an incline, but can't get to the top and falls down. Puppet number two, the "Good Samaritan" comes

along and helps puppet number one up the incline. Then the third puppet, "Mean Jack" appears and pushes puppet number one back down.

The researchers then take the three puppets, which are all the same colour, just slightly different in shape, and present them to each toddler in turn. Eighty-five percent of the toddlers reach out and grab a puppet. Ninety percent of those who grab a puppet pick the Good Samaritan! The conclusion is that there is an innate delight and tendency within humans towards acts of kindness and goodness.

In a recent documentary entitled *Babies: Born to be Good?* David Suzuki shows us how children as early as nine months old seem able to make moral choices that were never thought possible. So given the fact that our past environment may not have been able to encourage and help preserve this goodness, here are two suggestions to help us reclaim our self worth as adults.



No matter how much people tell us how loveable or desirable we are, it won't matter much. What will matter more is what we tell ourselves and what we believe about ourselves.

First, we need to take an honest look at our intentions and behave in ways that are in line with our conscience and soul nature so we may feel good about ourselves. Secondly, we need to cultivate some kind of meditation practice because in this silence and stillness we get to experience peace and calmness. Peace is the first sign that we are in contact with our soul. By interiorizing our attention, we are able to access this innate goodness and capacity to love. This, in my opinion, is one of the most convincing pieces of evidence of our self-worth.

And so the journey towards self-worth is really a journey of purification. Purifying our thoughts, our intentions and our actions. It's a spiritual journey that forces us to abide by the rules of moral conduct, which in turn allows us to feel whole and joyful while nurturing our inherent goodness. ■

Claire Maisonneuve is the director of the Alpine Anxiety & Stress Relief Clinic in Vancouver. **Upcoming Anxiety and Stress Relief Program begins January 30.**

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I have had the privilege in my life of knowing a few people with a deep sense of self-worth and what I saw was they all had something in common, in their relationship to others and themselves – a sincere and genuine kindness, a readiness to be of service and a lack of negative judgments.

This led me to really ponder where self-worth comes from and how we get it. What I have concluded is that self-worth is acquired by how we treat others, what we do for them and how we do it. Let me explain.

Originally, we develop our self-worth as a child from the messages we receive from our parents – "You are important to us, you matter to us, we have confidence in you" – or by their actions: a smile, a look of admiration, a gentle touch of affection and special attention to our needs for help or our desire for recognition. All of these foster a secure and positive sense of attachment. On the other hand, regular criticism – "Why can't you be like your brother, what's wrong with you?" – a label of some kind of disorder, broken promises, a look of disgust, disappointment or exasperation may create a lack of security about our own acceptability, desirability and, therefore, our worth as a person.

Similarly, as adults, we also get our self-worth from relationships, however, now it's not from what we get from others, but more from what we give to others. As adults, no matter how much people tell us how loveable or desirable we are, it won't matter much. What will matter more is what we tell ourselves and what we believe about ourselves.

The degree to which we are able to receive any positive, loving messages from others as adults is based on our ability to receive them from ourselves. If you are someone who sometimes wonders why your spouse married you or why they love you, no amount of them telling you they love you will actually reassure you. That reassurance needs to come from yourself. You need to believe that you are worthy of his/her love. But how?

This is where our conscience and the universal rules

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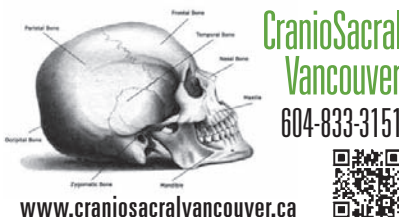
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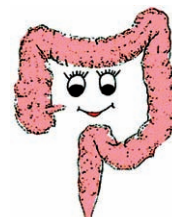
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– Bill Cosby



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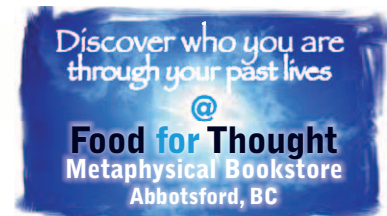


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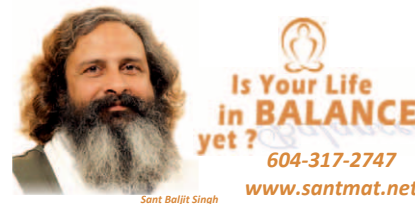
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Sun, Jan. 6 New Year Burning Bowl Ritual
Thu, Jan. 17 Rev. Mary @ Banyen Books, 7 pm: *How a 20th Century Mystic's Vision Can Change Your Life*.

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A new dream of humanity

It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community – a community practising understanding and loving kindness, a community practising mindful living. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth. – Thich Nhat Hanh

In Africa there is a saying: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." We live in a time where we must go both fast and far, meaning that we develop ourselves individually by realizing ourselves as Divine consciousness and then extending the benefits of this realization to the needs of our community. This community extends not just to our immediate family and friends, but to our workplaces, to the people we meet on the street, our city, our region, our country and our planet. We are, in fact, one great organism made of many cells.

According to the Maya, December 21, 2012 represents the end of a cycle of 5,125 years and the beginning of a new cycle. It is not an end in the ultimate sense, but the end of a process that has been unfolding – growing, maturing and

decaying – so that another order of experience can emerge.

At the end of a cycle the Maya would spend the day in prayer asking the Great Spirit, the source of time and measure, to bless the next cycle to be more beneficial for all of life than the one that came before. Through the power of prayer and intention, they knew they could influence the coming cycle in a positive way, planting it with seeds of goodwill that would be harvested over the course of time.

We have an opportunity to come together in a sacred way this winter solstice with those that we love and care for – our communities – and use this day to pray for a better dream. This play of light and shadow upon the screen of the world, which we call life or reality, is responsive to our intentions and imagination. We are called upon to forgive the dream that has not served us and to replace it with one that will support the evolution of our consciousness both individually and collectively. This could mean forgiving the dream of separation and embracing the dream of our unity, of releasing the ambition for personal salvation at the expense of our communities and instead earning it through heartfelt service to our communities.

Our generation of selfless servers must unite in our

efforts to love the world as our own body and ask ourselves: how far and how deep are we willing to go in this transformation? If we are to be entrusted with the empire, how do we prepare for this great responsibility? What is the vision of the next cycle we are willing to work towards in ourselves and as a planetary body? How does this look practically and are we able to create a roadmap broad enough to allow the details to be filled in through the implementation process itself?

Now is the time to ask ourselves these deep questions and come to this new cycle prepared to live the answers we have discovered within. Our knowledge is only as powerful as its practice in our lives and my hope for 2013 is that together we develop the courage, wisdom and perseverance to let go of what no longer serves us as we work towards a better dream for ourselves and for all of humanity.

All my relations. 

Zamir Dhanji is a local artist, visionary and community builder who chooses to give a voice for peace with the song of his heart. To receive notification about a Vancouver 2012 event with the above intention, please visit www.treeuth.com



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Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences
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DEC 8

Enlightened Living – Free Class, 2pm:
VEGETARIAN CHRISTMAS COOKING:
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DEC 21

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Chants for Peace, St. Paul's Labyrinth, 1130
Jervis St. 7PM. By Donation, \$10-\$20. Bring
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DEC 21-23

Winter Solstice marks the galactic alignment
and beginning of the new Mayan "Great
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broadcasting Synthesis 2012, live from Chichen

Itza in Piste, Mexico. During this time, World
Unity will also simulcast 9 more events from
around the world, including The Great Pyramids
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END OF JANUARY

Adbusters Event: "Meme Wars." Full event
details TBA. Darren Fleet, senior editor of
Adbusters (creators of the Occupy Movement),
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Linda 604-985-5840.

TUESDAYS

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Silver Linings Playbook



Staying positive in *Silver Linings Playbook*

There's a point early on in off-beat romcom *Silver Linings Playbook* where the protagonist, Pat, who has been feverishly reading Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell To Arms* through the night, picks up the book in a fit of rage and hurls it straight through the top floor window of his parents' house. It lands with a slap and the tinkling of broken glass on the darkened sidewalk below. He *really*

didn't like that story's ending.

As the title of the film suggests, unhappy endings, as exemplified by Hemingway's classic World War Two love story, get short shrift here. For Pat (Bradley Cooper), who we first meet in a mental health institution, finding the silver lining in everyday situations has become his way of managing his explosive mental condition. He tells himself to stay positive and maintain his equilibrium, believing that eventu-

ally he'll become the kind of man that his estranged wife Nikki will take back – even if she has put a restraining order on him.

The course of true love never runs smooth and as Pat returns to his parents' house his ethos is challenged not the least by people's ongoing wariness about whether or not he has recovered since "the incident." We spend the early part of the film trying to gauge Pat's psychological state and figure out his

obsessions. You know it's ok to laugh because there's comedian Chris Tucker playing his fellow inmate, obsessing about his hairstyle and breaking out of the asylum (a habit of his, it turns out). But writer-director David O. Russell deliberately maintains a darkness surrounding his protagonist's illness, which adds to the edginess of the comedy.

Bradley Cooper shows his acting dexterity, ably bridging the gap between Pat the manic stalker and Pat the romantic idealist. It also helps there is such a strong ensemble cast, in particular his main sparring partner Jennifer Lawrence as Tiffany, a quick-witted, sharp-tongued, but psychologically troubled, widow who strikes a deal with Pat to get his wife back. The pair's natural tendency to short-circuit social decorum with frank speech leads to some hilarious *non-sequiturs* and situations, like an ice-breaker exchange at a dinner party about the effect of all the drugs prescribed to them.

As more light is shed on the backstory and the film loosens up, O. Russell milks the mental health comedy and nicely flips the tables on characters, revealing foibles and issues among other members of the cast, including Pat's dad (Robert De Niro in good form), an obsessive-compulsive with various gambling charms and Pat's friend Ronnie, who can't hold an adult conversation with his wife.

However, comedy and a desire for a grand climax get the upper hand. By the last stretch of the film it loses its ability to surprise with any kind of authenticity or say anything of note. In what feels like a total cop-out, the plot heads off to a formulaic and overly neat resolution where characters, incidents and universe align in true Hollywood fashion. You can see why *Silver Linings Playbook* won the audience award at the Toronto International Film Festival. It is by and large an enjoyable play on the screwball comedy. However, it has the kind of ending that makes me want to throw it out of the nearest window. **K**

Robert Alstead writes for 2020Vancouver.com

Reflections & Music

Candlelit, meditative service of music and prayer, led by the Minister of Music Darryl Nixon, the St. Andrew's-Wesley Men's Ensemble, guest instrumentalists, and (bi-monthly) the St. Andrew's-Wesley Boy's Ensemble . . . a gentle contemplative way to renew your spirit through music and reflection.

Join us at 7 PM
on the 2nd Sunday
of every month

St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church
1018 Nelson (at Burrard), Vancouver
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Taizé

Candlelit meditative Taizé Prayers modeled on the Prayers as observed at the Taizé community in France. Repetitive Chant, led from the piano and enriched by instrumentalists and vocalist. Bible readings in multiple languages. Prayer around the cross...a gentle contemplative way to renew your spirit.

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